

## NARRATIVE

Of the PROCEEDINGS  
AT THE  
HERTFORD ASSIZES,

This Instant July 1676.

SETTING FORTH

The Tryal of the person that attempted  
to Fire the Town of HODSDON; with the  
Punishment inflicted on him.

The Tryal, Examination, and Confes-  
sion of two High-way-men, and one Pick-  
pocket, there Condemned to die.

And all other remarkable Occurrences.

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Published for general satisfaction.

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Licensed, July 25. 1676. *Re. L'Estrange*

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EDWARD A

# NARRATIVE

Of the PROCEEDINGS at  
HERTFORD-ASSIZES.

**W**Hereas Narratives of the chief Proceedings at several Assizes, have of late been published, and well received by divers ingenious inquisitive men, as tending not onely to divertise Readers with the novelty of the Relations, but likewise to forewarn innocent people of the subtile practices of Villains, that they may be forearmed against them; and especially to present Vice in its natural destructive Colours, and create a just abhorrency against it in all mens minds, seeing dayly how it brings those that follow it, to sad, untimely, and ignominious ends: I have therefore (pursuant to such laudible intentions) thought it might prove a service

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vice neither improper nor unwelcome, to present the world with the following Account or Abstract of the several notorious Malefactor Tryals, at the Assizes holden for the County of Hertford, July the 15th and 16th, 1676.

And first I may take notice of two young men here indicted and condemned for robbing on the High way : One of them had been an old Practitioner in that kind, said to be one of those that about a quarter of a year since, had the impudence to rob a Traveller of Seventy pounds, or thereabouts, in the day-time, just at Hemsted Towns-end, and in the view of several people. The other was but a fresh-man, lately listed in the Gang, living in London, by Trade a Last-maker, and newly set up in that Employment with a Partner; being lookt upon as a very civil hospitable fellow, and a little too much given to Company, and especially to the haunting of Fencing Schools, Prizes, and such robustious Exercises. That day the Robbery was committed, going forth in the morning, he told his Partner he was walking but to Islington, and should be back again about noon; but meeting (whether by chance or appointment, I cannot say) with this other fatal Companion, he inticed him to ride out with him upon the Pad, it being, as he protests, the first time he was ever abroad on any such disguise. When he objected the want of Horse for that purpose, the other told him, he knew where some fit for the work were to be let, and

that two House-keepers, (which he named) should be security for them: All which was done accordingly, and they went to sewers the Roads of *Hertsfordshire*, but without success; for they met with no prize till towards night, when they came up with an Innkeeper of *Bishops Strafford*, who by chance had not above twelve shillings in his pocket; so that they treated him very unkindly for not riding better furnish'd; which perhaps might more provoke and invigorate his search and prosecution after them, though no extraordinary diligence was required: For after they had robb'd him, they rode not above four miles, but took up their lodging as unconcernedly as might be, at a publick Inn at *Ware*, where they were the same night taken in their beds upon the Hue and Cry sent after them; and thereupon sent to *Hertsford* Goal, and now condemned to die. 'Tis said, they were after Condemnation very penitent (especially the Last maker) and that they have made a discovery of, and impeach'd several persons in *London* that used to infect the Roads, particularly the two persons that now sent them out, and engaged for their Horses; who are privately retired thereupon, and do for the present abscond themselves.

Another person was here Arraigned, convicted, and Condemned for picking a pocket at *Hemsted* fair: He was taken in the very Act, and

and had very little to say for himself, nor we of him.

But that which made the most Noise and Discourse at this Assizes, was the Trial of a person for wilfully attempting to set the Town of *Hodsdon* on Fire, that he and some thievish Confederates of his might thereby have the fitter opportunity to steal and pilfer distressed peoples Goods, in that lamentable distraction. The Prisoner was born and bred for the most part in *St. Martins le Grand, London*; but by reason of an ill Education and bad Examples, became very loose and extravagant in his Conversation, and fit (it seems) for any enterprise of mischief. Upon the 20. of *June* last past he came down to the said Town of *Hodsdon* in this County, and took up his Quarters at the *Black Lion* Inn there, where he continued likewise the next day, and eat and drank very plentifully, waiting for, as 'tis believed, the arrival of his Associates; but they not coming all day, it seems he was resolved to go about his wicked designe, although he were all alone. For the next Evening, *June 21.* taking up a live Fire brand out of the Kirchen, under pretence of lighting his Pipe of Tobacco, he went with it out into the back side, and so directly into the Stable, and there put the Brand, fresh and burning as it was, into the Rack full of Hay. But as he went through the Yard thither, a young Maid

at

at the next door saw him out at the window, and perceiving him to go with fire into the Stable, called to him after he was in there, and asked what he did there: Who answered, *No harm, no harm.* However the Maid, fearing the worst, presently called her Father, who with another Neighbour went immediately into the Stable, and there found part of the Fire-brand burning in the Rack: But the Prisoner, at the Alarm given by the Maid, and hearing them come, had endeavoured to pull the Firebrand out of the Rack again, and so had broken it, and what was left had only burnt a little Hay: but not proceeded so far as to flame, when these two men came in and prevented it, so that no part of the Stable was burnt, or any further mischief done; which must be attributed to the wonderful Mercy of Providence, directing so seasonable a discovery of it; which otherwise possibly (nay very probably, considering the situation of this Lane, and the Wind and Weather at that time) might have destroyed the greatest part of the Town.

Being thus taken in the Fact, he was carried and examined before two of his Majesties Justices of the Peace for this County, *June* the 22<sup>th</sup> 1676. where he confessed he did design to set the aforesaid Stable, and consequently as far as in him lay, the whole Town on Fire: That he was hired for that purpose by two idle persons, whose Names and Lodgings in

Lon-

London he declared, with description of their Habits and Persons of whom one is since taken, and at present in the Gatehouse, but absolutely denies what is charged upon him; the other has been strictly searched for, but cannot be found :) From these Fellows, he said, he had received the summe of Thirty shillings on Thursday, June the 13, on condition to come down, and set this Town of Hodsdon on fire, that they (who promised to follow) might have the advantage to Steal and plunder; and that they had treated further about his going afterwards to fire the Town of Herisford, for which he was to have Five Pounds. At his Trial he pleaded, *Not Guilty*, for forms sake, yet did not in reality disown the Fact; but when the Firebrand and some Hay-ashes were produced in Court, he cried out with an horrid Imprecation, *What do you bring that for, do I deny it?* And still persisted to affirm all that he had declared before the Justice: However, it being only an intention (though a most wicked and cruel one) and no part of the House or Stable actually burnt, it could not be adjudged Felony within the Statute, but a misdeameanour of the highest rate imaginable; and accordingly for his punishment he received Sentence, To stand two several Market-days in the Pillory, and is fined Three Hundred Pounds, and never to be released out of Prison till he hath not only paid the same, but also given such good Security

rity as two Justices of Peace of this County of *Hertsford* shall approve, to be of the good behaviour for the future, during the term of his life. In pursuance whereof, as I am informed, he stood on Wednesday the 20th of *July*, in the Pillory at *Hodsdon*, and on the Saturday following suffered the same punishment at *Hertsford*; and so was reconvey'd to the Goal, thereto lie till he can discharge his Fine, of which there is no great probability.

**F I N I S.**